

## Kansas Quilts and Quilters

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as the romance form with realistic elements, an "almost obsessive interest" (8) in the relationship of environment and character, reform issues, and a focus on marriage and religion. However, as Gallagher's annotations show, these writers were also living through cultural changes that surface in the novels as alcoholic characters, independent unmarried women, economically and emotionally deprived marriages, charlatan ministers, and the disappearance of small-town society and morality. These are "counterculture strains" (25) that stretch the novels beyond the simply formulaic popular romance.

Although the majority of the novels are set in the Midwest, the concerns of the authors were not limited to the region. Nevertheless, Gallagher's observation that these female authors were concerned with a sense of place could be clarified by some comparison with other American women regionalists, such as those anthologized by Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse. Overall, *Illinois Women Novelists in the Nineteenth Century* provides an introduction to women's fiction, once highly valued, that deserves reconsideration and study.

*Kansas Quilts and Quilters*, by Barbara Brackman, Jennie A. Chinn, Gayle R. Davis, Terry Thompson, Sara Reimer Farley, and Nancy Hornback. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993. 216 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, appendix, index. \$40.00 cloth, \$22.50 paper.

REVIEWED BY JANICE TAUER WASS, ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM

This work is one of many state-focused publications, resulting from the efforts of legions of volunteers dedicated to documenting quilt-making. Almost every state has benefited recently from the extensive research and exciting discoveries of statewide quilt research projects. [See the joint review of books that emerged from projects in Indiana, Nebraska, and Ohio in the Summer 1992 *Annals of Iowa*. — Ed.] The goals of the Kansas project are typical: "to heighten public awareness of quilts as examples of Kansas folk art, to document the lives of Kansas quiltmakers and their work, to collect data and establish a repository at the Kansas State Historical Society, to promote the art of quilting through public programs, and to promote the conservation and preservation of quilts" (11). To achieve these goals, volunteers conducted Quilt Discovery Days in communities, where more than thirteen thousand Kansas quilts were documented.

The essays in this volume show how folklorists, social historians, and art historians can use everyday objects, such as quilts, to yield insights into the lives of women that are unavailable through other sources. Important questions directed the project and these essays.

In some cases this new data calls into question popular assumptions, such as the assumptions that women quilted on the overland trails and that there is an identifiable African-American quilting aesthetic.

Analysis of data from all of the state projects has underscored the difficulty in defining state or even regional styles in quilting. Although the eight essays contained in this volume use data collected in Kansas, they reflect contributions to social history and quilt history applicable throughout the Midwest and the nation. Essays on nineteenth-century red and green appliqué quilts, on fabric and conversation prints, on Mennonite and African-American quilting, and on traditions of quilting groups augment the growing body of scholarly work exploring this American cultural tradition. Other essays put quilting within the context of Kansas social history. The book also pays well-deserved tribute to the Kansas leaders who fed the national quilting frenzy of the 1930s, such as Carrie Hall and Rose Kretsinger. This thought-provoking book helps readers uncover the rich cultural meanings wrapped in quilts.

*Railroad Postcards in the Age of Steam*, by H. Roger Grant. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994. xiv, 208 pp. Illustrations, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAMES C. HIPPEN, DECORAH, IOWA

This album of railroad postcards begins with an annotated essay on "The Picture Postcard Phenomenon," followed by five sections of postcards, reprinted in black-and-white, grouped by subjects: "Trains and Rolling Stock," "Depots and Railway Structures," "The Railroad Corridor," "People and Railroads," and "The Lighter Side of Railroad-ing." The 162 views represent thirty-nine states, with the largest number from Iowa and Missouri.

Such a book might be expected to provide a guidepost for students of railroad history on the local level. Unfortunately, its deficiencies are numerous. There is little on the methodology of using postcards as sources for railroad history. Indeed, the postcards are reproduced on such inappropriate paper that much of the original detail is lost. The captions on each page are usually quite short. Brevity, however, has not always been compensated for by accuracy. A Frisco freight along the Spring River in Arkansas is marked "unidentified" (32). The Santa Fe station in Oklahoma City is misidentified, even though there is a large Santa Fe sign on the tower (70). Too often the captions merely describe the scene, rather than offering the interpretation and analysis needed by those who are not railroad

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